GARDEN notes

SUMMER 2024

Northwest Horticultural Society

Aster × *frikartii* 'Mönch'
Image by Richie Steffen

The garden at Old Goat Farm

Old Goat Farm sign

The back patio behind the farmhouse

Old Goat Farm Farewell

By Michelle Prestin

This Spring we said goodbye to a long-time, beloved Northwest treasure — Old Goat Farm. More than simply a garden or a nursery, it was a welcoming oasis full of beautiful plants; one-of-a-kind art and sculpture; crazy dogs; and rescue animals including chickens, ducks, Guinea hens, peacocks, a donkey, and, of course, goats. At the helm were two of the most welcoming curators and caretakers: Greg Graves and Gary Waller were the founders and stewards of Old Goat Farm for nearly two decades.

Greg did not start out in the horticulture or nursery business. His career began following his father's footsteps in the railroad industry. Horticulture was certainly an interest, and after a visit to Heronswood Garden, he was motivated to take the hobby to the next level and lay the path for a future career change. The daughter of a co-worker was attending the Edmonds Horticulture Program, and in 1993 Greg decided to enroll. He attended the evening program taking 1-2 classes per quarter while maintaining his day job. Five years later as he neared completion of his degree, Bess Bronstein, his then professor, persuaded Greg to apply for a one-year internship at the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden. He was accepted, and ten months into the internship, he applied for a full-time position never looking back. After serving as Head Gardener at the Miller Garden for 13 years, Greg "retired" in 2011 to focus fully on Old Goat Farm.

Old Goat Farm nursery

About the time Greg was finishing up his degree, he attended the NW Flower & Garden Show as a volunteer where he met Gary who that year had entered competitive floral displays (and won 7 out of 8 as Greg recalls proudly). Thus began a relationship that would last 25 years until Gary's recent passing. They were a complimentary match, one a bit messy, perhaps, the other tidy. One enjoyed colorful borders, perennials, and labor-intensive pots. The other enjoying evergreen structure and foliage. One liked to collect and arrange "tchotchkes," the other didn't love dusting. One said no more animals while the other said yes to all the animals (guess who won). Names are left off to protect those involved.

In 2005, Gary and Greg left Seattle and purchased the home that would become Old Goat Farm. Greg was still commuting to the Miller Garden. There were no plans for a nursery and display garden initially. They simply "wanted to indulge in all the plants and rescue animals," said Greg. However, with their love and skill for propagation, it only took a year before a small nursery business was started. With a nursery up and running, open garden days naturally took shape. When you have a nursery and open garden, then you need greenhouses, so those were added next. One might say it snowballed.

The duo launched their famous Christmas teas in 2007. With Gary's passion for Christmas and decorating, their home became a feast for the eyes. Each room was extravagantly decorated based on a unique theme, including the bathrooms. Every year the themes would change. It was truly a sight to behold and was one of Greg's great highlights looking back on the years. Gary amassed hundreds of boxes of décor. Those who attended open garden days in the past year may have been lucky enough to leave with some of these special Christmas decorations and now ensure Gary's cheer will be spread for years to come.

Other favorite memories for Greg include the Farm to Table dinners hosted in the summer garden. Fellow NHS member Justin Henderson's sister-in-law was the chef and, with course after course of small plates, everyone left well fed. The slow pace and garden setting were a perfect combination for a serene and beautiful evening.

Greg is one of the most humble gardeners you will ever meet. He shies away from any fuss or attention regarding his accomplishments, although they certainly merit fuss and attention. Not only did Greg have a long and successful horticultural career, develop and run a beautiful garden and nursery, but he lifted others up along the way. When Greg's name comes up in conversation, it is so often followed by, "I wouldn't be doing this if it weren't for Greg!" or "Greg was the reason I joined NHS!"

Justin Henderson, past NHS president, is one such gardener who thanks Greg for years of guidance and encouragement leading him to his role as garden director at PowellsWood Garden in Federal Way. During Justin's earliest years in horticulture, he ran a community garden. Greg and Gary donated plants, tools and even some proceeds from their teas to help boost the garden. For all these reasons and more, Justin describes his friend as having an incredibly "gracious spirit." This captures the essence of Greg perfectly.

The many rescue animals at Old Goat Farm certainly benefited from this gracious spirit. The nursery proceeds largely supported Greg and Gary's efforts to give formerly unwanted animals a sanctuary "to live out their days in peace." Besides the resident goats, a favorite of visitors were the showy peacocks, often perched high above the garden seeming to keep an eye on all the happenings. Resident pups Roxy and Zoe also patrolled the premises employing very different tactics. Roxy was likely to knock you over with her exuberant welcomes while Zoe made sure to see all while slinking through the shadows.

During my casual interview with Greg, I began by asking him about his decision to pursue horticulture and his reply was simply, "I figured I would do something I like." It was obvious that Old Goat Farm was a labor of love and how lucky for all of us who got to experience it. Nonetheless, managing a nursery, caring for dozens of animals and upkeeping a sizable, aging house alone after losing a partner prompted Greg to realize the time had come to make a major life transition.

It's difficult to let go of this space, not only for Greg who is leaving his home, his plants, and his business, but for those who looked forward to the weekend openings and excitement of finding plants that were hard to come by elsewhere. Greg is retiring from the nursery business, but of course, that doesn't mean his gardening days are done. He is relocating a bit further south to a smaller house, a bigger view, and a virtual blank slate for his next garden. His new garden will have more sun (likely more deer) and with that comes all the excitement of planning, growing plants he hasn't had before, and dreaming big. That is what all of us gardeners are good at — seeing potential, making necessary changes, and then nurturing new life to create new space. John F. Kennedy said, "Change is the law of life, and those who look only to the past and present are certain to miss the future." Greg's future no doubt will be full of gorgeous foliage, inspiring plant combos and lots of life.

A big thank you to Greg for all the years of beauty and gracious mentorship. The full NHS community sends well wishes for your next big adventure and garden space. Cheers and happy planting!

Michelle Prestin is owner of Flower & Twig garden design and a member of NHS.

Greg Graves with the author

EASY TO GROW NATIVE BULBS YOU SHOULD BUY NOW

Text & Images by Richie Steffen (unless otherwise noted)

Camassia quamash (in the wild)

Camassia leichtlinii ssp. *suksdorfii*

Okay, now that it is mid-summer, it is time to think about spring by perusing through the bulb catalogs to order and plant in the fall. I have already received several bulb catalogs in the mail touting their new offerings for fall planting. As the summer heat continues, lawns dry up and the water bills grow, it is a great time to think about adding spring blooming bulbs to the garden. One of my favorite groups of bulbs to plant are the West Coast native bulbs and their cultivars. If you have not tried any of these bulbs, you need to catch up to the times! They may not match the brilliance and flashy blooms of tulips, but they make up for it with durability, gracefulness and are often unpalatable to deer and rabbits.

There is a nice selection of native bulbs and cultivars available with a wide flowering time from mid-March to late May. One of the first West Coast bulbs I added to my garden was purchased as *Brodiaea laxa* 'Corrina', now classified as

Triteleia 'Corrina'

Camassia quamash 'Orion'

Camassia leichtlinii ssp. *suksdorfii*

Camassia leichtlinii ssp. *suksdorfii* 'Blauwe Donau'

Camassia cusickii
(Wallowa Mountains, Ore.)

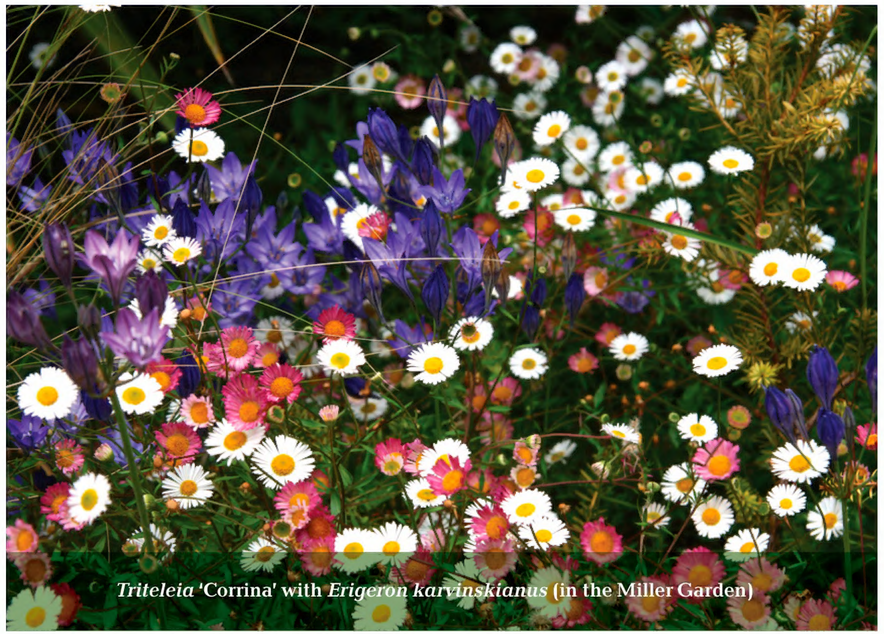
Camassia cusickii with *Delphinium* sp.
(Wallowa Mountains, Ore.)

Triteleia 'Corrina', and it took a while to sort out the right name. Now, correct names can easily be found on reference sites on the internet. I will often verify a name using the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Plants of the World website (https://powo.science.kew.org/) and the Flora of North America online (http://floranorthamerica.org/Main_Page). Many of our natives are still offered under old names and often are not written following the standard rules of botanical Latin. Hopefully, this article will help you sort out the old names from the new and help you find the exact bulb you want to add to your garden. In my case and with a little research, it became clear that the genus *Brodiaea* had been split into more than one genus, and now several of our native bulbs have been reclassified from *Brodiaea* to *Triteleia* and *Dichelostemma*.

Probably the most widely known and grown of our native bulbs is camas. There are three species native to the Pacific Northwest. The most widespread is *Camassia quamash*, small or common camas. Flowering in mid-to-late May, this bulb has narrow green foliage with a thin flowering spike above the leaves. It can range in height from six inches to nearly thirty inches but is typically between twelve to eighteen inches tall. The star-shaped flowers can range from pale lavender blue to deep indigo, or rarely white. Two cultivars are usually available: 'Blue Melody', a dark blue-flowered form with foliage edged in thin bright yellow, and 'Orion', a deep violet blue flowering selection.

The second most widely grown camas is *Camassia leichtlinii*, tall or great camas. Another widespread species, it grows over much of the same range as common camas, from British Columbia to California. This stately species can reach nearly 4 feet tall but is usually around 3 feet in the garden. The first form of this species recorded in Western horticulture is the white form found in the Umpqua Valley in southern Oregon around Roseberg. Being the first of this species to be given a botanical Latin name, it is referred to as *Camassia leichtlinii* subsp. *leichtlinii*. Bulb catalogs will usually list it as *Camassia leichtlinii* alba. One of the more unusual forms regularly offered is the double-flowered form, *Camassia leichtlinii* 'Semiplena' with beautiful creamy white star-shaped blooms.

The more typical color of this bulb is shades of bluish purple. This color form is known as *Camassia leichtlinii* ssp. *suksdorfii*. There are several cultivars of *Camassia leichtlinii* subsp. *suksdorfii* easily available through mail order, although these are rarely sold with this subspecies name. *Camassia leichtlinii* subsp. *suksdorfii* Caerulea Group is a lovely mid-lavender blue. It is often sold as *Camassia leichtlinii* Caerulea.


Triteleia 'Corrina' with *Erigeron karvinskianus* (in the Miller Garden)

Triteleia sp. (in the wild)

Dichelostemma ida-maia
(near Shasta Lake, Calif.)

Camassia leichtlinii subsp. *suksdorfii* 'Blauwe Donau', typically sold as "Blue Danube," has a deeper blue purple petal color making the yellow stamens standout. Two other cultivars that provide a nice break from the typical blues and purples are 'Aurora' with a pale mauve bloom and 'Pink Stars' with light pink flowers.

The third camas species often available is *Camassia cusickii*. Native to northeastern Oregon and western Idaho, this species makes dramatic stands in the Wallowa Mountains. When seen in the wild, it forms tight, full leafy clumps with multiple spikes of sky blue flowers. The cultivar 'Zwanenburg' is occasionally for sale and is darker in color, often described as wisteria blue. The widely available cultivar 'Blue Heaven' is a hybrid between *Camassia leichtlinii* ssp. *suksdorfii* and *Camassia cusickii*. This vigorous cultivar has pale lavender flowers flushed sky blue. 'Blue Heaven' is, on a rare occasion, improperly labeled *Camassia leichtlinii* Caerulea Blue Heaven in bulb catalogs.

Camas are adaptable to many soils and are particularly tolerant of heavy clay soils. These bulbs can also tolerate locations that are wet in the winter but dry out in the summer. Although you can get a decent number of flower stems in bright open shade, the best show is in full sun. Once blooming is complete, the remaining stems can remain to mature. Camas will often self sow. To control the number of seedlings, remove the flowering stems once the blooms are spent.

Triteleia is a vastly underused bulb in our Pacific Northwest gardens. These charming, delicate plants are consistent performers, persisting for years and in some instances reseeding and naturalizing. Closely allied with *Brodiaea* and *Dichelostemma*, this genus can still be found and sold under *Brodiaea*, the genus it was formerly considered to be included under. The common names for this genus vary with the species. Collectively, they are sometimes referred to as triplet lilies, although they are not related to true lilies (*Lilium*).

Triteleia hybrids are the most common types available and are a beautiful way to become acquainted with this group. As mentioned earlier, the first Western native bulb I grew, *Triteleia* 'Corrina' (often sold as *Brodiaea laxa* 'Corrina'), is still one of my favorites. The deep rich blue purple flowers are such a striking color and very similar to the blue tones of *Agapanthus*. 'Corrina' is late to flower for a bulb, blooming in late June to early July. The flowers are held on thin wiry

stems about 8 to 15 inches tall in loose umbels. This is a bulb to plant in mass for the best effect. Since it is the color of *Agapanthus*, I often plant these around my *Agapanthus* crowns; so, when the *Triteleia* flowers, it gives the appearance that this mid- to late-summer blooming perennial is flowering early.

Other popular hybrid selections range in color from reddish purple to white. *Triteleia* 'Queen Fabiola' is very similar in color and size to 'Corrina', but each flower has a pale lavender center giving a bright luminescent quality to the bloom. 'Silver Queen' has clear white flowers and 'Rudy' has white flowers with striking purple stripes running from the petal tips to the throat. A recent addition to the bulb market is *Triteleia* 'Aquarius', an unusual double purple form. I have not grown this cultivar but need to try it out soon!

Occasionally, some of the native *Triteleia* species are offered. Most of these are native to California and a few to southern Oregon. The Pacific Bulb Society (www.pacificbulbsociety.org) can be a useful resource to learn more about these species. Most *Triteleia* grow best in full sun and open situations where the late winter-growing foliage is not covered by other plants. These bulbs are completely drought tolerant and will need no additional watering once planted.

***Dichelostemma congestum* (Siskiyou Mtns., Oregon)**

***Dichelostemma capitatum*, (Siskiyou Mtns., Oregon)**

***Brodiaea californica* (Ruff tuff cream puff, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons)**

Dichelostemma is another genus in the Brodiaea Complex. These bulbs differ from *Triteleia* in having small, more compact umbels, generally on taller, curved and twisted wiry stems. The most widely available species is *Dichelostemma ida-maia*, the firecracker flower. It can still be sold under its old name *Brodiaea laxa* Coccinea but is becoming more widely known under its current botanical name. Although the flowers are not large, their brilliant red color makes them quite noticeable in the garden. Upon closer inspection, you can see the interesting combination of the red tubular flowers with green and white tips. Native to northern California and southern Oregon, it can be found growing on the edge of woodlands and grassy slopes. This has been a short-lived bulb in my garden, but I think it would perform better if planted in a location with heavier soil where it received no water during the summer. Even though it is short-lived for me, I tend to buy some every couple of years to refresh the planting.

There is a unique hybrid of *Dichelostemma ida-maia* represented by the cultivar 'Pink Diamond'. It is often sold as a selection of the species, but it is the naturally occurring hybrid *Dichelostemma* × *venustum*. This unusual bulb is the result of hybridization between *D. ida-maia* and *D. congestum* or *D. multiflorum*. *Dichelostemma congestum* has compact umbels of purple flowers and *Dichelostemma multiflorum* ranges from purple to pink. This lovely form was grown at the Miller Garden for several years before it was crowded out by nearby shrubs. *Dichelostemma congestum* and *Dichelostemma multiflorum* are difficult and rare to find in nurseries. While you are searching for these two species do not pass up *Dichelostemma capitatum*, another species similar in habit with tall stems topped with clusters of purple flowers. It may be easier to find seed of these three species.

There are few true *Brodiaea* that can be found available for sale. *Brodiaea* looks similar to *Triteleia,* but the flowers have three fertile stamens instead of six. Three *Brodiaea* species can be found either as seed or bulbs: *Brodiaea californica*, *B. coronaria* and *B. elegans*. These bulbs require full sun and well-drained soils and are best with little to no summer watering. The cultivar *Brodiaea californica* 'Babylon' is often offered for sale through bulb catalogs and is a soft pinkish purple in color.

I think one of the oddest of the native bulbs I grow is *Fritillaria affinis*, checker lily or chocolate lily. I have long admired this in other gardens and just this spring added it to my garden. In mid-spring, 1 to 1 ½ inch pendant bowl-shaped blooms dangle from strong upright stems 8 to 20 inches tall. The flowers are unusually colored with a base color of green or yellow, then with varying degrees of purple mottling which gives a checkered appearance. Even with these muted flowers, it is very charming. *Fritillaria* bulbs do not dry-store well and, as a result, they are often not offered as loose bulbs. It is better to purchase already growing plants in the spring or grow them from seed. These are best in full sun to open shade with well-drained soil and not a drop of water is needed once they are planted.

***Fritillaria* sp. (Siskiyou Mtns., Ore. – possibly *F. affinis*)**

***Erythronium californicum* (Stan Shebs, CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons)**

***Erythronium* 'Pagoda'**

A true gift to the garden is the elegant and beautiful *Erythronium*, commonly referred to as dogtooth violets or fawn lilies. We are blessed with having the most species of this genus native to the West Coast. Sadly, only a few selections are regularly offered for sale. If you are interested in growing a wider variety, you must search out small specialty nurseries and seed exchanges. The few that we can readily acquire are great garden plants and grow robustly. *Erythronium* bulbs, like *Fritillaria* bulbs, do not dry-store well and must be planted immediately. Even with this, some amount of loss should be expected.

The most widely available cultivar is *Erythronium* 'Pagoda', sometimes listed incorrectly as *Erythronium californicum* 'Pagoda'. This beautiful selection has tall flowering stems that can reach 12 inches tall, carrying multiple butter yellow flowers. The leaves are as beautiful as the blooms emerging apple green with a light chocolate and silver mottling. As the leaves mature the mottling fades, leaving shiny waxy bright green leaves until May. This is a sterile selection so all the energy after flowering goes to making more bulbs and creates full clumps after a few years.

More recently, *Erythronium californicum* 'White Beauty' has become more available. An elegant selection, it is often sold as *Erythronium revolutum* 'White Beauty'. In truth it may be a hybrid, but it is thought to mostly be *Erythronium californicum*. The graceful white flowers are not as profuse as 'Pagoda', but they are

Erythronium revolutum

Erythronium oreganum

no less beautiful. This selection has more mottling to the leaf that does not fully fade away as the leaves mature.

Two of our Washington *Erythronium* natives, *E. revolutum* and *E. oregonum*, can occasionally be found as potted plants in the early spring. This is the best way to acquire this species if you want blooms fast. Both are some of our most breath-taking native wildflowers and, once established, will gently self-sow in the garden. *E. revolutum* has purplish pink flowers and *E. oregonum* is white; both have stunning foliage with fabulous chocolate and silver mottling.

Although *Erythronium* can grow in dry areas, I find that they self-sow and grow more robustly in areas that receive occa-sional watering, even when the bulbs are dormant. They will flourish best in full sun to bright open shade.

Native bulbs deserve wider use in all our gardens. Their beauty and resilience are such assets, and their adaptability allows for some seasonal color in tough spots. If you have not tried these bulbs, it is time to embrace them and there is no time like the present. Watch for them in your favorite bulb catalogs and don't wait too long or they might be sold out!

Richie Steffen is Executive Director of the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden and a member of NHS.

LITERARY NOTES
from the Miller Library

Brian Thompson

Leafing through the pages of any popular gardening magazine, you'll find authors extolling their favorite plant. Scale that up to a whole book of top picks and you have *What Gardeners Grow: 600 Plants Chosen by the World's Greatest Plantspeople*.

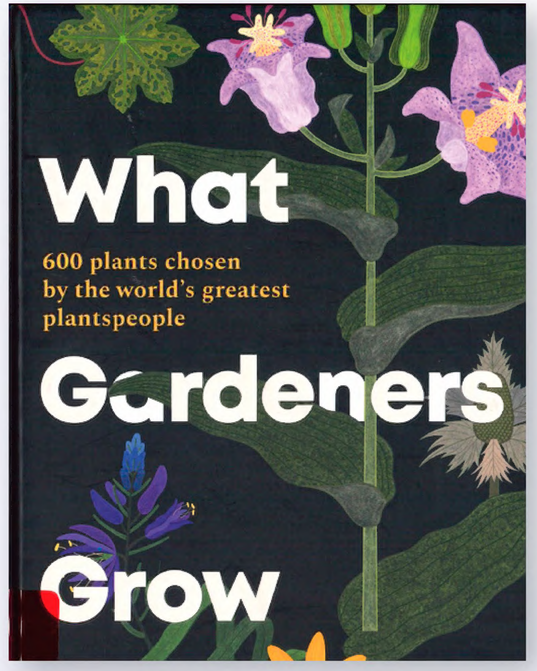
This is quite unlike any other title in the Miller Library col-lection. There are over 200 authors. Each bringing their own voice to describing their choicest garden plant. Or, in some cases, two or three favorites. A light hand of editing allows the writers to extol, rant, describe in detail, or rely on esthetic impressions — much like you'd expect in a casual conversa-tion with your NHS buddies.

What makes this remarkable is these are all people who have garnered considerable expertise. While focused on the UK, this is an advantage to Pacific Northwest gardeners, as most of the plants will thrive here, too.

Speaking for the publisher Bloom (for Frances Lincoln), com-missioning editor Zena Alkayat writes, "the motley collection of plant descriptions [are] all written especially for this book and listed in no particular order." This random layout could be frustrating — or delightful, depending on your preference and perhaps your mood.

Each author includes insights to best growing techniques, and a sidebar fills in season, size, soil, exposure, and hardi-ness needs. But most important is what excites the writer.

A good example is provided by Neil Miller, the head gar-dener at Hever Castle and Gardens who describes the pineapple guava (*Acca sellowiana*): "I love exotic and tropical plants and this is the nearest you're going to get to growing



these in the UK. The plant has beautiful, orchid-style, edible, cherry-red and white flowers with silver green leaves, and delicious fruits that taste of pineapples, apples, strawberries and mint!"

To enhance this description is an illustration by Melanie Gandyra. Through the book are many of these paintings that while botanically accurate, are often in a style reminiscent to me of fabric illustrations. The colors are especially vivid.

This book is fun! Best for stimulating your imagination rather than as a reference source. Perfect for flipping through on a warm summer afternoon.

Brian Thompson is the manager and curator of horticultural literature for the Elisabeth C. Miller Library.

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GARDENnotes

Editor
Rick Peterson
rickp@millergarden.org

Designer
Mary Gogulski
mary@gogulskidesign.com

Contributors
Laura Blumhagen
Emily Dexter
Michelle Prestin
Sashi Raghupathy
Richie Steffen
Brian Thompson

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear NHS Members,

I hope you've been enjoying the summer so far. For me, summer has always been a time to stay home in the beautiful Pacific Northwest and savor this glorious season. However, this year has been unusually filled with travel. Throughout my career in software engineering, I've always appreciated attending conferences and trade shows, as they offer deep insights into current trends and provide invaluable opportunities to connect with others and expand my perspective. This spring and summer, I decided to explore some key hubs of horticultural influence across the U.S. My journey—or pilgrimage, as I like to call it—took me to several notable locations:

Philadelphia Area: I visited the renowned gardens of the Brandywine Valley and met with the staff of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. These organizations have significantly shaped the horticultural traditions of this country and continue to serve as beacons of excellence.

Southern Plant Symposium at Raleigh: Jointly hosted by the JC Raulston Arboretum and Juniper Level Botanical Garden (JLBG), this event featured a visit to the famed Plant Delights Nursery and the associated JLBG, founded by the renowned horticulturist and plantsman Tony Avent.

American Public Gardens Association Annual Conference in Boston: This event gave me the opportunity to explore the historic Arnold Arboretum. It was profoundly moving to stand beside one of the earliest specimens of *Acer griseum*, collected from China in 1907. No trip to Boston is complete without visiting the Blaschka Glass Collection, nestled within the Harvard Museum of Natural History. The exquisite detail and artistry in these glass models, which so intricately mimic nature, are always awe-inspiring. Following that, I visited the remarkable Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens, which has undergone extraordinary growth in a very short time.

Denver Botanic Gardens: Most recently, I returned from a visit to this outstanding garden.

These visits make one reflect on the impact that individual philanthropy has had in creating and sustaining these outstanding gardens and horticultural traditions. At the same time, it is highly motivating to see gardens like the Coastal Maine Botanical Garden and the Denver Botanic Garden, which were started and are sustained by **grassroots movements and community dedication**. Throughout my travels, the hospitality, kindness, and openness of the horticultural community have been deeply comforting. I have returned from my trips with a wealth of ideas and inspiration.

Back home in the Pacific Northwest, it was wonderful to meet members and their guests during this year's Meet the Board Tour. I hope that the upcoming Heronswood Member's Day will provide even more opportunities like this. We at NHS will strive to create more events like these to bring the community together and offer opportunities to connect in-person.

We have a great lineup of webinars and classes for the rest of the year. Climate change, ecological diversity, and sustainability remain at the core of our focus. Keep an eye out for the announcement about our upcoming Fall Virtual Symposium, titled ***Trees and Their Changing Ecosystems***. It features an excellent lineup of speakers and topics that will appeal to a wide range of audiences.

Until we connect again in the fall!

Sashi Raghupathy
NHS President

Northwest Horticultural Society
PO Box 354115
Seattle, WA 98195

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"Among the thicket of choices to be made, don't forget to plan some time in your garden. This should not be time for chores, but for enjoyment, for pleasure, for delighting in this piece of land you're shaping into beauty."

–Mara Grey,
"The Lazy Gardener" (2002)

***Dahlia* 'Yellow Hammer'**
Image by Richie Steffen

Telephone: 206.504.3329 www.northwesthort.org E-mail: info@northwesthort.org